

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN SA 01441 112301Z

60

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 EB-07 AGR-05 TRSE-00 COME-00

OMB-01 INRE-00 /067 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7857

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 1441

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT ES HO

SUBJ: SALVADORAN REACTION TO BAHANA BRIBE SCANDAL

1. SALVADORAN INTEREST IN THE EVOLVING STORY OF ALLEGED MALFEASANCE IN HIGH PLACES IN TEGUCIGALPA IS INTENSE. ALL NEWSPAPERS HAVE DAVOTED FRONT PAGE BANNER HEADLINES TO EACH NEW DEVELOPMENT AND MOST HAVE CARRIED IN ADDITION THREE OR FOUR INSIDE PAGE STORIES, AND UNUSUALLY HEAVY TREATMENT FOR THE SALVADORAN PRESS. THE COVERAGE HAS BEEN STRAIGHT WIRE SERVICE REPORTING, WITH NO EDITORIAL COVERAGE YET. THE GOES, AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, HAS MADE NO OFFICIAL COMMENT. ONE THE OTHER HAND, ALFREDO MORALES RODRIGUEZ, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND MEMBER OF THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT PARTY, PCN, HAS GIVEN THE PRESS HIS PERSONAL VIEWS. RODRIGUEZ SAID HE WAS NOT SURPRISED TO HEAR THAT LOPEZ, WHO "ATTEMPTED A GENOCIDE OF SALVADORAN PEASANTS," WAS INVOLVED IN IMPOSING A BANANA TAX ON THE ONE HAND, WHILE NEGOTIATING WITH THE BANANA COMPANIES ON THE OTHER. "UNFORTUNATELY" HE ADDED, "THE

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PAGE 02 SAN SA 01441 112301Z

HONDURAN PEOPLE ARE JUST NOW LEARNING WHAT TYPE OF GOVERNMENT

THEY HAVE HAD."

2. THE AMBASSADOR MET WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON APRIL 10 TO EXCHANGE IMPRESSIONS ON THE HONDURAN EVENTS. THE AMBASSADOR SHOWED BORGONOVO THE HEADLINES IN THE PAPER DESCRIBING THE BRIBE CHARGE AGAINST LOPEZ. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO WENT OVER WITH HIM THE DECLARATION OF THE HONDURAN SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL, PARTICULARLY THE PART WHICH STATED THAT THE COUNCIL FULLY SUPPORTS LOPEZ' EFFORTS TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE HONDURAN-SALVADORAN DISPUTE. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED BORGONOVO IF HE HAD READ THE STORY WHICH REVEALED THE BRIBERY CHARGES. AFTER READING THE ARTICLE, AS CARRIED IN SPANISH IN A LATIN AMERICAN PAPER, BORGONOVO SAID THAT IN HIS OPINION LOPEZ WAS "FINISHED" BY THIS ALLEGATION. HE SAID THAT LOPEZ HAD BEEN WEAK BEFORE AND THAT EVEN IF THE ARTICLE WERE PARTLY INCORRECT THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL COULD NOT POSSIBLY ALLOW LOPEZ TO REMAIN, EVEN AS A FIGUREHEAD.
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